

## HERNANDO CORTÉS

Hernando Cortés is probably the most famous of the Spanish conquistadors, or conquerors. He is remembered for destroying the Aztec Empire and conquering Mexico for Spain. Though a brilliant military leader, he was cruel and brutal toward the Indians.

As a young man, Cortés studied to become a lawyer. But, like Columbus, he dreamed of adventure. In 1504, he came to Hispaniola in the New World as a farmer. Seven years later he took part in the conquest of Cuba. In 1519, he was sent by the governor of Cuba to conquer Mexico.

Cortés founded the city of Veracruz in Mexico and then marched on and destroyed the Aztec holy city of Cholula. With 500 soldiers and 16 horses, he then proceeded on to Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital. Tenochtitlan is today called Mexico City.

Tenochtitlan was an unusual city. It was built on an island in the middle of a lake. Access to the city was over a causeway, a raised road that crossed a wetland. Such terrain was easily defended by the Aztecs, who killed many of Cortés's men before they were defeated.

Several factors proved to be in the Spaniards' favor. The Aztecs believed that Cortés was Quetzalcoatl, a god who was supposed to return one day as a bearded white man. Because of this, Montezuma, the Aztec emperor, welcomed Cortés warmly. The Aztecs also believed that each Spanish soldier and his horse was one being. They had never seen horses before and were naturally terrified of them. They assumed that man and horse together was some kind of magical animal. Imagine their surprise when a conquistador dismounted and walked away!

The Spaniards were further aided by the hatred that other Indians of Mexico felt toward the Aztecs. This was because an important feature of Aztec religion was human sacrifice. Most of the victims for this practice came from prisoners taken by the Aztecs in war. Little wonder that many of these Indians were more than ready to help Cortés in his conquest of Mexico.

Because of Hernando Cortés and later Spanish explorers, Spain became the leading power of Europe. The gold and silver taken from the Indians of the Americas also made Spain the wealthiest nation in Europe.

Cortés later turned northward for further adventure. In 1536 he founded the first European settlement in Lower California. As a closing note, lovers of such treats as chocolate candy and ice cream owe a debt of gratitude to this famous explorer. He introduced chocolate to Spain in the early sixteenth century.

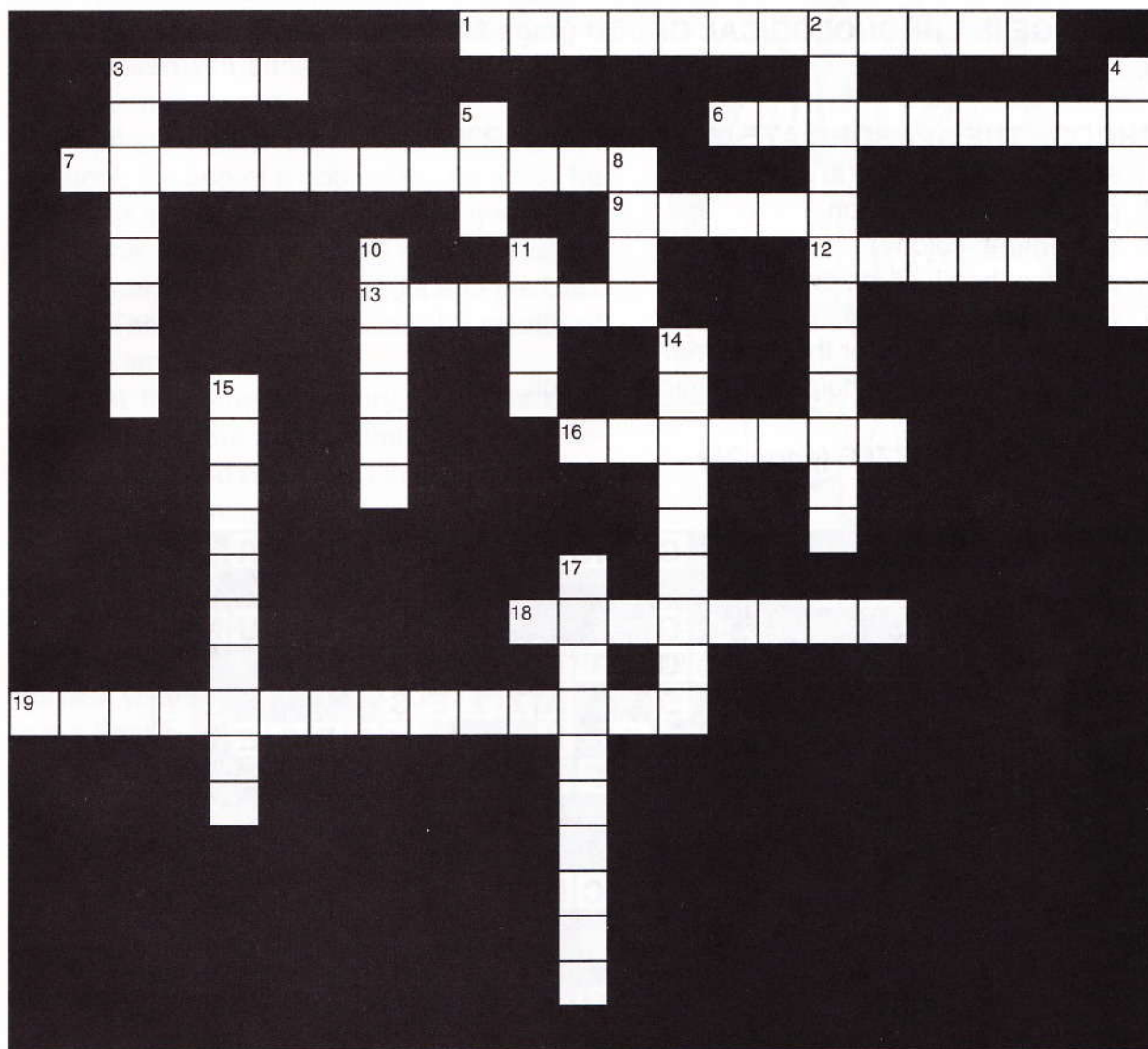




Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**HERNANDO CORTÉS CROSSWORD PUZZLE**

Use the clues below and information from the narrative to complete the puzzle.

**ACROSS**

1. Spanish word for conqueror.
3. The governor of \_\_\_\_\_ sent Cortés to conquer Mexico.
6. Aztec emperor.
7. Aztec god.
9. Cortés conquered the \_\_\_\_\_ Empire.
12. The Aztecs thought a soldier and his \_\_\_\_\_ were one being.
13. Where Spain is.
16. Aztec holy city.
18. City founded by Cortés in Mexico.
19. Religious practice of the Aztecs (two words).

**DOWN**

2. Aztec capital city.
3. A road over a wetland.
4. Profession Cortés studied for.
5. At first, the Aztecs thought Cortés was a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Tenochtitlan was built in the middle of a \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Part of the New World conquered by Cortés.
11. Valuable metal Spain got from Mexico.
14. Tasty treat introduced into Europe by Cortés.
15. Cortés founded the first European settlement in Lower \_\_\_\_\_.
17. What Tenochtitlan is called today (two words).